

Re-opening of Srinagar-Rawalpindi Marg

†1265. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are trying to find out any solution with regard to re-opening of Srinagar-Rawalpindi highway, which is closed for the last fifty years and to simplify the formalities regarding visa;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(c) if so, by when an action would be taken in the direction of ensuring easy movement of people of India and Pakistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) Government are of the view that the promotion of people-to-people contacts between India and Pakistan, will contribute to our desire to establish peaceful, friendly and cooperative ties with Pakistan.

In keeping with this approach, and to promote a congenial environment and confidence building before the visit of President Pervez Musharraf to India (14—16 July, 2001), Government announced several significant initiatives amongst which were measures to promote further people-to-people contacts along the International boundary and the Line of Control. On 9th July, 2001, Government announced that henceforth, Pakistani passport holders would be allowed to come by the road route and obtain visas at the check post at Attari. An additional check post will be opened at Munabao in Rajasthan. Similar check posts will also be opened at designated points along the International boundary and the Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir. Government also specified that administrative arrangements including those for transport would be urgently put in place so as to implement these decisions within three months.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.